



CENTER FOR ITALIAN MODERN ART OPENS TO PUBLIC FEBRUARY 2014

New Foundation Advances Appreciation and Scholarship of Modern and Contemporary Italian Art through Focused Annual Installation and Fellowship Program

Inaugural Program Spotlights Creative Output of Futurist Fortunato Depero and Marks First In-Depth Presentation of Artist's Work in New York since 1928



Fortunato Depero, *Doppio ritratto di Marinetti (Double Portrait of Marinetti)*, 1923.
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New York, NY (December 19, 2013) – The Center for Italian Modern Art (CIMA) today announced it will open to the public in New York City on February 22, 2014. Established in 2013 by curator, art historian, and collector Laura Mattioli, CIMA is dedicated to promoting scholarly research and advancing public appreciation of modern and contemporary Italian art throughout the United States and around the world. Each year, CIMA organizes and presents at its SoHo location an installation devoted to work rarely seen outside of Italy and supports scholars in research fellowships tied to core exhibition themes. Through its annual installation, fellowships, and cultural programming, CIMA provides opportunities for the public and scholars alike to explore Italian modernist masterpieces in-depth and to consider the legacy and ongoing impact of this work on contemporary art.

CIMA's inaugural installation and program focuses on the work of Fortunato Depero (1892 – 1960), marking the first time that an exhibition dedicated to the Futurist artist and designer has been presented in New York since he lived in the city some 86 years ago. The installation comprises more than 50 rarely seen works by Depero in a variety of media—including paintings, sculpture, tapestries, collages,

drawings, and magazine covers—all drawn from the Gianni Mattioli collection and considered one of the most important holdings of Italian avant-garde and 20th-century art. Curated by Laura Mattioli and compiled by her father, the Gianni Mattioli Collection has loaned works to institutions throughout the world, including the Peggy Guggenheim Museum in Venice, where a selection of works have been on long-term loan since 1997, and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum for its forthcoming presentation *Italian Futurism 1909 – 1944: Reconstructing the Universe* (February 21 – September 1, 2014), which showcases work by Depero among other prominent Italian Futurists.

“The launch of the Center for Italian Modern Art marks a critical milestone for the international appreciation of 20th-century Italian art and an important step in overcoming the range of cultural, academic, and political obstacles that for far too long have prevented a broader awareness of the significance of modern and contemporary Italian art,” said CIMA Founder and President Laura Mattioli. “I was fortunate to be immersed in the incredible work of this period from an early age—an experience that has guided and inspired both my professional and personal life—and I am now humbled and excited to introduce such thought-provoking works to new audiences.”

In conjunction with the foundation’s opening, CIMA will host a Study Day on Depero on February 21, 2014, encompassing a series of scholarly lectures, presentations, discussion groups, and installation tours. CIMA will also publish a full-color catalogue of work from the exhibition, with an introduction by Laura Mattioli. The catalogue will also be available in digital form on CIMA’s website, allowing readers to access expanded information on the artist, including a complete biography and bibliography, essays on core themes explored in his work, and archival photos and personal notes by Depero.

“Italy is highly praised for its excellence in fashion, design, and the culinary arts, but until very recently Italian modern and contemporary art has been largely overlooked. Our goal is to serve as an incubator for new discourse, scholarly debate, and increased public appreciation of 20th-century Italian art, in all its variety and complexity,” said CIMA Executive Director Heather Ewing. “Through our coordinated installation and fellowships, and our related programming, we hope to inspire, support, and stimulate new institutional and scholarly attention on the significant artistic movements of this time.”

About the Installation

On view from February 22, through June 28, 2014, CIMA’s inaugural installation documents Fortunato Depero’s most original and creative period and showcases his diverse roles as a Futurist artist, graphic designer, product designer, and theorist. Presented in CIMA’s intimately scaled installation space, and curated by Laura Mattioli, the installation fosters close looking and encourages direct and durational interactions with the works of art on view, ranging from Depero’s first forays into Futurism in 1913, through the work he created in New York City around 1930.

Born in 1892 in the Trentino region of Italy, Depero enlisted in the Futurist ranks after moving to Rome in 1914, where he studied the work of Umberto Boccioni and befriended Filippo Tommaso Marinetti and Giacomo Balla. Although he identified with Futurism throughout his 50-year career, Depero collaborated with artists throughout Europe and created an aesthetic that pushed beyond the movement’s orthodoxy, engaging in fruitful dialogues with Dada and Metafisica, Valori Plastici and Art Deco, the Ballets Russes and the Société Anonyme. His non-traditional work merged the boundaries between high and popular

culture, a conceit championed by the Futurists. In 1928, Depero moved to New York and opened a workshop on 464 West 23rd street, called Depero's Futurist House. It was here where he exported the factory-like model of production that he had experimented with while living in Rovereto, Italy, producing paintings, wall panels, pillows, interiors, posters, and stage settings and costumes. It was also in New York that Depero launched collaborations with magazines, including *Vogue*, *Vanity Fair*, and *The New Yorker*, among others.

The installation provides an overview of the range of work Depero developed during these first two prolific decades of his career. Highlights include:

- A group of drawings from 1913 and 1914 that reflect Depero's first interactions with the Futurist movement and his early focus on the deconstruction of forms and the graphic representation of movement. These works are installed next to Umberto Boccioni's iconic *Sviluppo di una bottiglia nello spazio* (*Development of a Bottle in Space*), 1913;
- Large paintings, sculptures, and tapestries from the inter-war period, which represent the activity of Depero's Casa d'Arte in Rovereto and the Futurist House he later established in New York in the late 1920s. With these, the artist explored a model of production between craft and industry, and developed his own unique vocabulary, mixing Futurism with Metaphysical imagery. Robotic, colorful fauna inhabit magical cityscapes in paintings such as *Diavoletti di caucciù a scatto* (*Little Rubber Devils*), 1919, and *Cavalcata fantastica* (*Fantastical Ride*), and *Città meccanizzata dalle ombre* (*City Mechanized by Shadows*), both from 1920; and
- The first futurist book, Depero's "bolted" anthology, *Depero Futurista* ("Libro imbullonato") from 1927. Documenting the life, work, and ideas of Depero and his friends, *Depero Futurista* is an innovative self-portrait of the artist that revolutionized the traditional concept of the book. This pivotal work will be presented at CIMA unbound with each page individually displayed as part of a large-scale installation. A second copy of the work will be displayed intact with its unique nuts-and-bolts binding—a binding that intentionally makes the work incompatible with other traditional books, as it would damage any neighboring volumes on a shelf.

CIMA concurrently presents two iconic works by Italian conceptual artist Fabio Mauri (1926 – 2009), a leading figure of the postwar Italian avant-garde whose eclectic artistic output ranged over several fields, including visual art, literature, theater, writing, and performance. The first work is the white enamel-on-canvas painting *Schermo* (1968), which belongs to a series first undertaken by Mauri in 1957 as he strove to challenge the teachings of the *Informel*, the post-war Italian art movement often compared to Abstract Expressionism. The second is a video of the performance *Gran Serata Futurista 1909-1930* (1980), a four-hour-long film divided into three parts exploring historical events surrounding the early 20th-century Italian avant-garde, particularly the activism and militarism of the Futurists in favor of Italy's entrance into World War I. When presented in dialogue with Depero, both Mauri works introduce important questions about the impact and legacy of Futurism in light of its historic ties to Fascism.

About CIMA

The Center for Italian Modern Art (CIMA) is a private nonprofit foundation established to promote scholarly research and advance public appreciation of modern and contemporary Italian art in the U.S. and internationally. Through research fellowships, annual installations, and ongoing sponsorship of cultural programming, CIMA advocates for a deeper awareness of 20th-century Italian art and its enduring legacy and serves as an incubator for new discourse and scholarly debate. The annual program of CIMA is overseen by its Executive Director Heather Ewing, with guidance by its Advisory Committee, including President Laura Mattioli, Emily Braun, Flavio Fergonzi, Vivien Greene, and Valentina Pero.

Established in 2013 and located in New York City, CIMA will open on February 22, 2014. CIMA will be open Tuesday through Saturday by appointment only, with guided tours offered on Fridays and Saturdays.

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